



## California National Guard Counterdrug Task Force

# The Informer

### Message from HQ

COL Richard M.H. Loesch

CDTF Commander



Third Quarter 2005  
California National Guard  
Counterdrug Task Force

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Counterdrug Headquarters  
Sacramento, CA

#### Public Affairs Note:

For reasons of operational security, the last names of most CDTF members are not published.

I write this on the anniversary of the 229th year of our declared independence from Great Britain. We are at war in our fight against Global Terrorism with many of our CD Soldiers and Airmen deployed to the Iraq and Afghanistan theaters. I am constantly reminded of their sacrifices as well as those of you who have returned to us have made. We are left to watch out for the families left behind and offer our prayers for the safe return of those deployed. Thereafter, we turn to our tasks at hand namely, the War on Drugs and, what is now called, the Trans National Threats within the borders of this country. There is always much work to be done.

Toward the end of April the task force held its FY 05 Horizon Conference in Sacramento. It is essential to get the staff and team leadership together to prepare for the upcoming year and share some face to face time. I took the opportunity to address the many concerns that have come to my attention since assuming the duties as your Counterdrug Commander (CDC). These concerns focus on Return From Deployments (REFRADs), Overgrades, Medical Evaluation Boards (MEB), Physical Evaluation Boards (PEB), Fit for Duty (FFD) determinations, and the organization of the task force given projected budget constraints for FY 06.

So what the heck did I have to say?

• First off I emphasized my intention to find employment for all our REFRAD CD service members (SMs) within the CNG. My preference is to bring all CD SMs back into the task force. Failing that, our J-1 will work with each member to get them employment.

What must be kept in perspective is the J-1 has specific procedures detailed in regulations, policies, and procedures that must be adhered to. They are dedicated to bringing

success but those of you who REFRAD must do your part too. Stay in contact, meet your suspenses, and keep this a win/win situation.

• As all of you know some in the task force are overgrade in the positions they occupy. Based on CSM London's first Senior NCO conference in 2003, Team Cdrs have the latitude to recommend retaining personnel to me who are overgrade based on the Team's budget and the position description being commiserate with the new rank attained. I asked each Team Cdr to consider carefully their recommendations and to provide me the supporting rationale for my approval. We will review overgrade status on a yearly basis because of our current budget constraints. You Soldiers and Airmen need to keep the leadership informed of your promotion status. We, as leaders, will work with you. DO NOT JUST DROP A PROMOTION ON US AT THE LAST MINUTE! If we can not plan for what's happening in your career; we may have to thank you for your services and wish you well on where ever you may go.

• MEB, PEB, and FFD...we have about 12 personnel who fall into this category. I believe if you have been injured and are unable to perform your assigned duty that we need to do all we can to make you whole so you can return to duty. The problem is the length of time it takes to get evaluations, determinations, and releases. While the lengthy time

See "Message" on Page 2

### ***“Message” continued:***

required to get determinations affects the overall proficiency of the task force, it is also a great disservice to you, our Soldiers/Airmen and your families. We are now able to handle all our MEB, PEB, and FFD requirements within the task force. Our HQs medical coordinator, a combat medic too boot, is learning the ins and outs to expedite what is generally too long of a process. Give this effort every assistance. If you are required to submit documents from your personal physicians or hospitals, do so right away. In the long run to delay hurts not only this task force but you and your family.

- What will we look like as a task force as we travel into FY 06? The biggest change will come with TEA. They will transition into a line company for the emerging aviation Security and Support Battalion. While we will keep TEA activated within its parent company, we still need to work through how this relationship will shake out. I must say I believe most of it will be transparent as we are fortunate to have both the Bn and one whole company within our state. Next to consider is our quarterly “adjust fires”. These reviews may make changes to our TDA when needed based on mission support requests. We are stewards of the money given us to do our jobs. We

must always ensure we are meeting the support requests of our LEAs and CBOs to the fullest extent possible. Truly this task force must be a lean, mean, fighting machine to stay relevant and use our resources effectively.

I traveled to Fairfax, VA, the 18th through 20th of May to work on a prospective CD OCONUS project labeled MITRAS’ HAMMER (see page 3). NGB J3-CD had in mind to put together a CD TF consisting of several states who would provide personnel, equipment, and expertise to foreign national militaries, LEAs, and CBOs in the areas of drug interdiction and demand reduction. The idea is a sound one that needs further work. Suffice it to say, the CD National Program has the potential to be of significant value to DOD’s OCONUS counternarcotic (CN) efforts. Our hope is to build teams who will prove their value to, for instance, our State Partnership for Peace countries in their efforts to curb the horrible effects illicit drugs bring to a nation. Further, our success in this arena emphasizes our value to DOD’s CN efforts.

We ended this month with a display of our task force at the Rayburn Building in Washington D.C. Our Soldiers and Airmen who represented us were outstanding. We brought with us personnel from the LEAs and CBOs we support.

While there some of our Guardsmen went to see SGT Nevins at Walter Reed Hospital. SGT Nevins is a CA Guardsman who is recovering from wounds that took one leg and may yet take the other. In speaking with our CD Guardsmen who visited the hospital and our SGT Nevins, I was taken by our Guardsmen’s overall awe at the positive attitudes displayed by those veterans they encountered. Our personnel were profoundly moved, as was I with what they related to me. We will be asking for donations to provide SGT Nevins with a proper set of Dress Blues so he can attend his Bn’s Dining-In this summer. Major Kim Oliver will have more to say regarding the particulars of this effort (see page 6).

In closing let me briefly address our current situation involving the recent resignation of MG Eres as the Adjutant General and the accusations that have followed that resignation in the media. We are not here to placate the whys and wherefores of a media but to preserve and defend the people and property of this state and nation. We are an outstanding dedicated force of men and women who remain accountable to our constituency – the people of this state and nation. We have and will continue to maintain that trust. CARRY ON!

## ***California Department of Corporations Unleashes Program to Protect Guardsmen from Con Artists and Fraud***

*By LTC Stan Z.  
JFHQ, PA*

The State of California Department of Corporations has joined the California National Guard to protect its citizen-soldiers, especially those returning from combat duty, from predators seeking to lure unsuspecting troops into what appears to be lucrative investments.

The California National Guard leadership wants all its installation commanders, subordinate commands, unit commanders, and unit administrators to be aware of Department of Defense Regulation 5410.19, Chapter 6.7.1 precluding them from approving or appearing to approve

seminars, business enterprises, products, ventures, or services at military installations or allowing outside enterprises from using its facilities, equipment, or other logistical support. California National Guard commanders should check with the State Judge Advocate at (916) 854-3505 if approached by businesses or enterprises requesting to speak at their units during drill or work.

The California Department of Corrections offers further support for those troops approached during off duty hours or locations outside their installations. Troops can sound TAPS—Troops Against Predatory Scams (TAPS)—for financial predators approaching them with deals that are “too good to be true,” by calling 1-866-ASK-CORP (275) 2677. TAPS is a service that provides tips, background information, and helps identify “red flags” of strangers with an investment that they say is a lucrative offer.

*For more background information read: “The Other Enemy: Ponzi Predators”, located on page 4.*





## Message from the Senior Enlisted Advisor

By CMSgt Jim Alsobrook

With the April Horizon conference behind us, Team Commanders and First Sergeants have received their guidance for the rest of the year from the CDC. By now much of the CDC's guidance has already been put into effect at the team level, with remainder occurring in the next fiscal year. The changes you see happening at your team level are absolutely necessary to ensure the Counterdrug program remains a relevant force multiplier to the agencies we support.

I had the opportunity in May to recognize some of our folks at the Combined Counterdrug Team Conference in San Luis Obispo. The following individuals were recognized for outstanding performance; Capt Luis C. Team Phoenix, TSgt Sarah S. Team Condor, and SFC Mark B., TSgt George M. and MSgt William T. from Team Fox. I also got the opportunity to meet for the first time some of our Service Members who work at the various Law Enforcement Agencies throughout the state; all in all it was a great conference.

We continue to be very successful in reemploying about 90 percent of our REFRADING Service members on an ADSW tour within the California National Guard. This success is a direct result of the efforts of our Headquarters J-1 office and the 100th Troop Command. I look forward to visiting the rest of our Counterdrug Teams throughout this summer, in the mean time, please be safe and keep up the outstanding work.

## Afghanistan: The Mithras' Hammer

By Master Sgt. Bob H.  
National Guard Bureau

KABUL, Afghanistan – The most lucrative crop in Afghanistan is a major concern to people like Mary Beth Long and LTG H Steven Blum. It is the poppy, the pretty flower that produces the seeds from which heroin is made.

Long is the deputy assistant secretary of defense for counternarcotics. Blum is the chief of the National Guard Bureau. They find none of the World War I, Flanders fields romance about the fields in Afghanistan where poppies grow. They are exploring ways in which the National Guard can help take a bite out of Afghanistan's illicit drug trade.

Long and Blum are concerned that sales of the high-demand but deadly, and illegal, heroin are financing terrorist activities and could undermine the new government that the United States and other coalition countries are trying to help build up nearly four years after al-Qaeda terrorists who were based in Afghanistan struck devastating 9-11 blows against this country.

"That's the problem with what's going on in Afghanistan," said Long, a lawyer and a 13-year veteran of narcotics, weapons of mass destruction and terrorism operations with the Central Intelligence Agency. "It's the undermining by this nefarious trade of the political and economic institutions that we are trying to build in conjunction with the Afghans."

An estimated 86 percent of the global heroin supply is cultivated in Afghanistan, up from 73 percent in 2003, according to the United Nations' Office of Drugs and Crime. Heroin is one of the most profitable illicit drugs because

it is compact and easily concealed. Officials believe that poppy cultivation will remain a problem until Afghanistan has a strong economy, with an infrastructure to enable farmers to earn a legitimate living.

The situation was underscored in a strategic partnership declaration signed by President George W. Bush and Afghan President Hamid Karzai on May 23. The joint declaration pledges the two countries "to remain steadfast in supporting Afghanistan's campaign to eradicate poppy cultivation, provide alternate livelihoods assistance, and fight the production and trafficking of drugs."

Long and Blum are exploring ways in which the National Guard can use the counterdrug experience it has acquired in this country since 1977 and in Central and South America to help thwart the illegal drug trade in Afghanistan. They discussed the possibilities while visiting that country in mid-June. "One of the things Ms. Long is looking at is leveraging the successful program that we have between the Department of Defense and the National Guard in support of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Border Patrol and other agencies in counternarcotics efforts in the United States, taking some of the lessons learned and seeing if it would assist the government of Afghanistan in their counternarcotics efforts," Blum explained.

They also discussed with American and United Kingdom officials ways that the National Guard's state partnerships with neighboring countries could help to change the economic balance in Afghanistan over the next few years.

The United Kingdom leads international counternarcotics efforts, including those in Afghanistan, and the United States clearly wants to help. Both countries have

See "Mithras' " on Page 5



## Safety Corner

By CW5 Roy L.  
CDTF Safety

### 101 Days of Summer

"101 Days of Summer." We are into the summer months. You should all have your own personal copy of "101 Days of Summer." for your own personal reference. COL Loesch in coordination with your Safety Staff produced this document in an effort to reduce the accident rate during the summer season. The document addresses risks, countermeasures, and short safety vignettes by military members to help you plan and execute your summer activities in the safest most enjoyable manner. I recommend you take it home and share it with your family. Use it as your standard operating procedures (SOP) to plan your summer activities.

### Motorcycle Safety

The motorcycle safety questions. You are not authorized to ride a motorcycle as a member of the CA-CDTF unless you have completed an approved motorcycle safety course, no ifs, ands, or buts. The command is responsible for providing the course to you at no cost. Now comes the logistics of getting this accomplished. The course normally cost \$200.00 on the civilian market and is free at military installations. Individuals will have to discuss the issue with their supervisors to determine how to get the course completed.

### Risk Assessment

The Risk Management Process addressing temporary duty (TDY), permanent change of station (PCS), and leave is now policy. Please see the memorandum produced by the CDC dated 02 June 05. The process is 3 phase in nature and requires 3 documents be executed

by the traveler and his supervisor. The why is this: DoD, Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marines are loosing more personnel in non-combat vehicle accidents than in combat each year. The recommended solution is more aggressive risk management and supervisor involvement in the travel of their personnel.

### Pest Control

Sometime back we talked about West Nile Virus and those nasty bugs, mosquitoes, that share the disease with us. This has been a really wet year and the mosquitoes are amongst us in record numbers. Just remember three things if nothing else; DEET in your insect spray, the mosquitoes like dawn and dusk and bare skin gives them the feeding site they need. So, cover up, use insect repellents with DEET in as high a quantity as you can find, and keep that skin covered up. West Nile Virus is rare, and, normally, so are shark bites in the gulf.

### Accident Statistics

Accidents statistics to date:

CA-CDTF accidents FY05: 71 accidents, 44 on duty, 27 off duty, and 121 lost work days, 323 restricted duty days. Dollar loss: \$53,000.

TF Grizzly/ IRT requiring CA-CDTF Safety investigations: accidents: 13, 12 on duty, 1 off duty. 6 lost work days, 25 restricted duty days. Dollar loss: \$ 13,475.



### The Other Enemy: Ponzi Predators

A Ponzi Scheme is named after Charles Ponzi who at 21, immigrated to Boston from Italy in 1903. In 1917, he discovered a legal loophole to generate small sums of money by investing in foreign currencies. It was a bonanza that generated more than \$10 million over seven months. The now-defunct Boston Post revealed that Ponzi was \$3 million in the hole. He eventually went to jail and was deported in the early '30s. Ponzi spent the rest of his life penniless. He died a pauper in Brazil in 1949.

Today, scam artists use the Ponzi method

to convince one or more friends to invest in a bogus company that he will pay a guaranteed return of 20 percent. What these friends don't know is that there is no hot company and that the scam artists simply pay early investors with money that future investors kick in. The early investors are so happy that they tell everybody to invest.

Unlike a pyramid scheme, no one is offered any money for bringing in more investors. The scheme grows, with a few people at the top getting returns, until the government intervenes, or the scam artist runs off with everyone's money.



### ***"Mithras" continued:***

deployed military forces to the country to destroy terrorist networks and to support and stabilize the new central government. National Guard troops have been training and serving with the members of the new Afghan National Army.

U.S. forces can destroy drugs if they are encountered during security and stability operations, it has been pointed out. Now it is time to consider ways that the Guard can help deal with the drug problem.

"The National Guard is the poster child for an integrated, holistic approach," Long observed. "Traditionally in the United States, the National Guard has provided the unique military capability that fits between the traditional military functions and support for law enforcement. In Afghanistan the Guard can bring its rich history of enabling the DEA and other counterdrug efforts that are going to be integral to undermining al-Qaeda and other threats to the Afghan central government and, quite frankly, to our coalition troops that are in the theater."

The Guard has been in the counterdrug business since 1977 when the Hawaii Army Guard, directed by the governor, provided helicopter support for law enforcement agents who were attempting to identify cultivated marijuana. Congress began funding Guard counterdrug operations in 1989.

The Guard has nearly 2,500 Soldiers and Airmen supporting counterdrug operations full-time in all 54 states and territories. Its funding for 2005 is \$261.9 million, 27 percent of the total amount earmarked for all Department of Defense services and agencies, it was explained.

The counterdrug people have become experts in narcotics reconnaissance and interdiction during the years they have supported state and federal law enforcement agencies, said Maj. Reyes Cole, chief of the National Guard Bureau's Drug Demand, Reduction and Training Branch.

They operate specially equipped airplanes and helicopters and ground vehicles to help civil authorities search for marijuana and to seek out other illicit drug

operations, such as methamphetamine labs.

Furthermore, the Guard is the only military organization that can directly support federal, state and local law enforcement agencies in this effort, because posse comitatus provisions prevent active duty military people from working with police and federal agencies such as the DEA.

The Guard could help in another way – through its State Partnership Program, Blum told Lt. Gen. Karl Eikenberry, commanding general for the Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan. That would involve shoring up the Guard's partnership alliances with the neighboring countries to make it more difficult to move drugs out of Afghanistan.

The Guard has already formed state partnerships with its three northern neighbors: Nevada with Turkmenistan; Louisiana with Uzbekistan; and Virginia with Tajikistan.

"We can help the Afghans work on their side of the border. The border countries, with State Partnership Program help, can guard the other side of the fence," Blum said. "If we've got to guard a fence, it's easier to do it on both sides."



Pictured above: Lt. Gen. H Steven Blum (left), Sec. Mary Beth Long (center), and Lt. Gen. Karl Eikenberry

## ***National Teen Leadership Program - Summer 2005!***

The National Teen Leadership Program is a three-day weekend conference where attendees will experience a high energy, exciting weekend designed to give them vision, hope, guidance, and a focus for the future. Weekend activities include; networking with other teens that want to change the future and move towards their dreams, hearing high-powered motivational speakers, workshops on relevant topics of interest to teens, small group sessions where students work on problem-solving and decision-making skills, a talent show, mini-Olympics, an abundance of high-energy peer support activities, and much more. They will develop skills and friendships during these three days that will be invaluable as they continue their education and enter the workforce.

The California National Guard (CNG) Counterdrug Task Force (CDTF) is sponsoring an essay contest. CDTF will provide 30 winners in grades 9th-12th, including graduating seniors with \*free tuition to attend the National Teen Leadership Program (NTLP) conference this summer. (This year's conference fee is \$369.00 and includes university accommodations, meals, seminar materials, program book, tee shirt, and much more.) Youth eligible to apply include CNG dependent teens and youth who participate in DDR missions throughout the year (examples include Drug Education for Youth (DEFY) camps, Students In Prevention (SIP)). For more information, please visit <http://www.calguard.ca.gov/readyfamilies/downloads/NTLPEssayInfo.revised.pdf>.

# Freedom of Speech

By 1Lt Bobby B.  
CDTF

My wife was waiting for me the other day at a coffee shop in Ocean Beach and as she drank her coffee, she listened to a discussion that was being held at the next table. The topic was our service members overseas in Iraq. One of the patrons declared that all of our service members were brain washed, and that they were stupid for just driving into the IEDs (Improvised Explosive Devices). They then had a lively discussion about the sailor that refused to depart with his ship recently, in San Diego, stating that he was smart, and they applauded him.

Now my wife was not a fan of us going into Iraq, nor is she very happy about us still being there, but as an Army wife and knowing how many soldiers that died while deployed, she debated on how to respond. She finally settled on just giving them a dirty look, knowing that I was on the way. When I came in, they immediately quieted down, as I happened to be in uniform. As I sat

down, their conversation resumed, but not at the level it was before. My wife told me all that they said, and I at first was very angry, then somewhat sickened, considering I saw what an IED could do, several times, first hand.

I was short on time, having to get to work, so I contemplated confronting these people before I left. I thought about telling them that our troops are not brainwashed. What they might call brainwashed is something different to me: Duty, honor, and selfless-service. Stupidity is not what drove those service members through those IEDs. They drove through those IEDs because they knew that other Americans and Iraqis might die if they didn't. To me they weren't stupid. Instead, I found them full of courage, pride, and intestinal fortitude.

That sailor that refused to get on that ship is no hero to me. To me he is a coward and more importantly, someone who is letting down his

nation. He was not a draftee. He signed the line to defend our nation against enemies foreign and domestic. I do not applaud him: I loathe him.

But the beauty of this whole situation is something that I have vowed to fight for, giving my life if needed in its defense: Freedom. Freedom of choice for what I want to say, and freedom of choice for what those in the coffee shop want to say.

So, in the end, as I thought about how to handle the ordeal, it was apparent to me that no matter how disgusting I found these people, they had every right to voice their opinion, and by my being in uniform, I was obligated to defend that right. My only response as I left was to give them a simple 'thumbs up'. I acknowledged their opinion, but that doesn't mean I have to agree with it. I just hope that someday they understand the price that has been paid for them to be able to say what they want.

## CNG Member Injured, Donations Needed

By MAJ Kim Oliver  
CDTF PAO

Last week while participating in the NGB Congressional Exhibit in Washington DC, a few CDTF participants decided to visit a fellow California National Guard member who is being treated at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. To say the least, I doubt any of us will forget the time spent visiting SGT Dan Nevins.

SGT Nevins was involved in an explosion while serving in Iraq (with his Engineer Company) and

has spent the last seven months at Walter Reed. The accident took his left leg and the life of his driver. Only time will tell if he will be able to keep his right leg as it is still causing him great pain. The one thing that really impressed us was his positive attitude and his willingness to see the best in his situation.

Prior to leaving the hospital I asked him if there is anything that he needed and he said just one thing..... "I need a dress blue uniform to wear in August as my unit is having a military function and they want me to come." With that, I said that I'd see what I can do to assist him in getting a uniform. I've talked

w/COL Loesch and he supports us taking donations from Task Force members in order to obtain a new uniform for this Soldier.

If you would like to contribute please send your check to me by 22 JUL. Please send all checks payable to Kim Oliver at 10293 Rockingham Drive, Sacramento, CA 95827-2521. Thanks in advance for helping out a fellow Guard Member.

MAJ Kim Oliver  
Phone: 916-854-3552 DSN (466-3552)  
Fax: 916-854-3834 DSN (466-3834)  
Email: Kimberly.Oliver@ca.ngb.army.mil

**Kudos!** The Counterdrug Task Force would like to congratulate LTC Michael P. and MSG Rita H. on their becoming Certified Defense Financial Managers.

## Joint Operation Results in Seizure

By Sgt Phillip V.  
CDTF

On 31 May at 1300 hrs, the Mobile Vehicle Inspection System (MVIS) Team Bravo received a warning order for a mission in Fresno, California. We were to support the Central Valley High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Task Force and the Clovis Police Department. By 1800 hrs that day all pre-combat inspections and the fragmentary order were complete. The mission was then briefed by SGT V. to the Team Shield Commander, as well as SGT V's team members. After the team's plan was approved by the Commander, we headed home to get some rest before our scheduled 0330 hrs departure. After a 407-mile

drive and a few minutes to set up the MVIS, we were ready to start scanning vehicles. Twenty-one hours had passed since our services were first requested. Our response time was unbelievable to the HIDTA agents on site. With this response time, they believed the team must have been local. They were amazed that we had arrived from Southern California.

The investigation centered on a drug-related triple homicide. These homicides were believed to be connected to the Mexican cartels. Four vehicles had been seized, one of which was the car the victims were shot in at point blank range. Clovis police were the lead agency in this

investigation, and with HIDTA Task Force, they were the benefactors of our machine. As a result of the joint operation, 24 pounds of methamphetamine, one 9mm pistol, and a VW Passat was seized. Fifteen pounds of methamphetamine are still unaccounted for and is believed to be at another location. When the location is learned, the HIDTA Task Force will again notify MVIS Team Bravo to assist. Team Shield's MVIS played a major part in the case being built against the suspects in this homicide and will continue to support the HIDTA Task Force mission.

**The following  
article was  
published in  
Southwest  
Airline's Spirit  
Magazine  
(June 2005):**

### JUST HOW BAD IS THE MIDDLE SEAT?

*Occasionally we receive messages from readers on something unrelated to the magazine. Although we can't always publish such correspondence, we thought we'd make space for this letter.*

Just about every business traveler would say being the last one to board a completely full, five-hour flight from Nashville to Seattle means getting a "bad seat." I suspected my "C" boarding pass meant an up-close view of a crying baby and indeed last week, I drew 11-month-old Savannah and her mother.

As Savannah perfected the art of tossing half-eaten Cheerios onto my suit, I jokingly asked her mother if Daddy had found a seat in the back of the plane. "No," she said, "Daddy is in Iraq."

Suddenly my luck wasn't so bad anymore. I was sitting next to two of our country's finest.

It's not often enough that we get to say thank you to our soldiers, though from time to time we try. But until this moment, I had never really thought about the others who were serving our country here at home, waiting for their family members to return.

Savannah only had two months with her father before he shipped out.

Southwest has been a great supporter of moving our military and their families around the country. And so I thought I might borrow an inch or two in *Spirit* magazine to publicly thank all those who serve (including

the heat-hurling lefty, my friend Savannah), sacrificing so much more for all the rest of us.

Savannah, we are grateful for your service, and I'll be proud to sit with you anytime. Your spit ball could use some

practice, but there's plenty of time to work on that.

The things we define as "bad," like the dreaded middle seat, are irrelevant compared to what Savannah, her mother and father and millions like them are going through.

Jim Wrigley  
Nashville



# Laughter Isn't Always the Best Medicine

By MSG Debra P.  
CDTF EO Advisor

Laughter is a great antidote for workplace stress and tedium. Jokes, humor and teasing all create a light atmosphere in which teams are formed, friendships cemented, and energy and productivity increased. That is, if the jokes, humor and teasing are not at the expense of any one group of people. Jokes, for example, that denigrate women, minorities or homosexuals can be hurtful, divisive and, in the worst cases, grounds for discrimination suits. Leaders and service members face the challenge of encouraging respect for diversity without stifling the levity we all crave in our fast-paced lives.

Many service members have resisted changing the nature of their humor because they never understood why particular jokes were a problem. After all, they reason, if no member of the targeted group is within earshot, no harm is done. What they forget is you never know who can hear the joke from another room or will learn through the grapevine that the offending comment was made. Also, how do you know someone who is listening is in fact

not a member of the group being joked about? It is impossible to know, for example, whether someone is gay or has an ethnic or racially mixed heritage.

But there is an even more important reason for avoiding potentially offensive humor. Let's assume that the people who hear the joke or comment are not of the group being joked about, no team member from the group will ever know the joke has been told and the people listening have no negative feelings about what has been said. Even under these unlikely circumstances, there is still a problem. Telling potentially offensive jokes and comments sends a message to all team members, regardless of gender, race or background, that your workplace is one in which it is acceptable to make fun of people and respect for individuals of all backgrounds is not truly valued. That is the single most important reason to make an effort to use humor that does not depend on denigrating particular groups.

Another element confusing the issue is that sometimes women and

minorities tell jokes about themselves and even laugh when others tell them. The logic is clear and understandable: "If they can tell those jokes, why can't I?" It may surprise you to hear it is no more acceptable for a member of a group to tell a joke about the group than it is for a nonmember. No matter who is telling the joke, the behavior contributes to an atmosphere of disrespect and discomfort.

Also, the fact that a person laughs at an inappropriate joke does not necessarily mean he or she is comfortable. Think about it. Have you ever gone along with a comment or joke that upset you just because you did not want to appear judgmental or uptight? All people are prone to do this, especially when they feel left out or at a disadvantage. The last thing any person who feels like an outsider wants to do is separate him or herself further by not going along with the program. If you recall a time when you were the outsider, you will no doubt remember the same urge to blend in and ignore offensive comments or behavior.

*"In the end, it's not the words of our enemies we'll remember; it's the silence of our friends."*

MSG Debra P.  
Equal Opportunity Advisor  
Counterdrug Task Force  
Commercial: (619) 545-0101  
DSN: 735-XXXX

## DoD Sexual Assault Hot Line (800) 497-6261

The DoD announced a toll-free number which has been established for people who want to contact or provide information to the DoD Task Force on Care for Victims of Sexual Assault.



## Air Force Portal

The Army has Army Knowledge Online (AKO), the Air Force now has the Air Force Portal. By registering and obtaining access to <https://www.my.af.mil>, you obtain endless accessibility to the A-Z catalog of Air Force web resources, such as current air force news, AF Fitness Management System (AFFMS), MyPay, Knowledge Now, Information Assurance (IA) Training, Air Force Virtual Education Center, Virtual Military Personnel Flight (vMPF), and TRICARE Online.